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# HOMELESSNESS AND GAMBLING: A COMPLEX RELATIONSHIP

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## Gambling

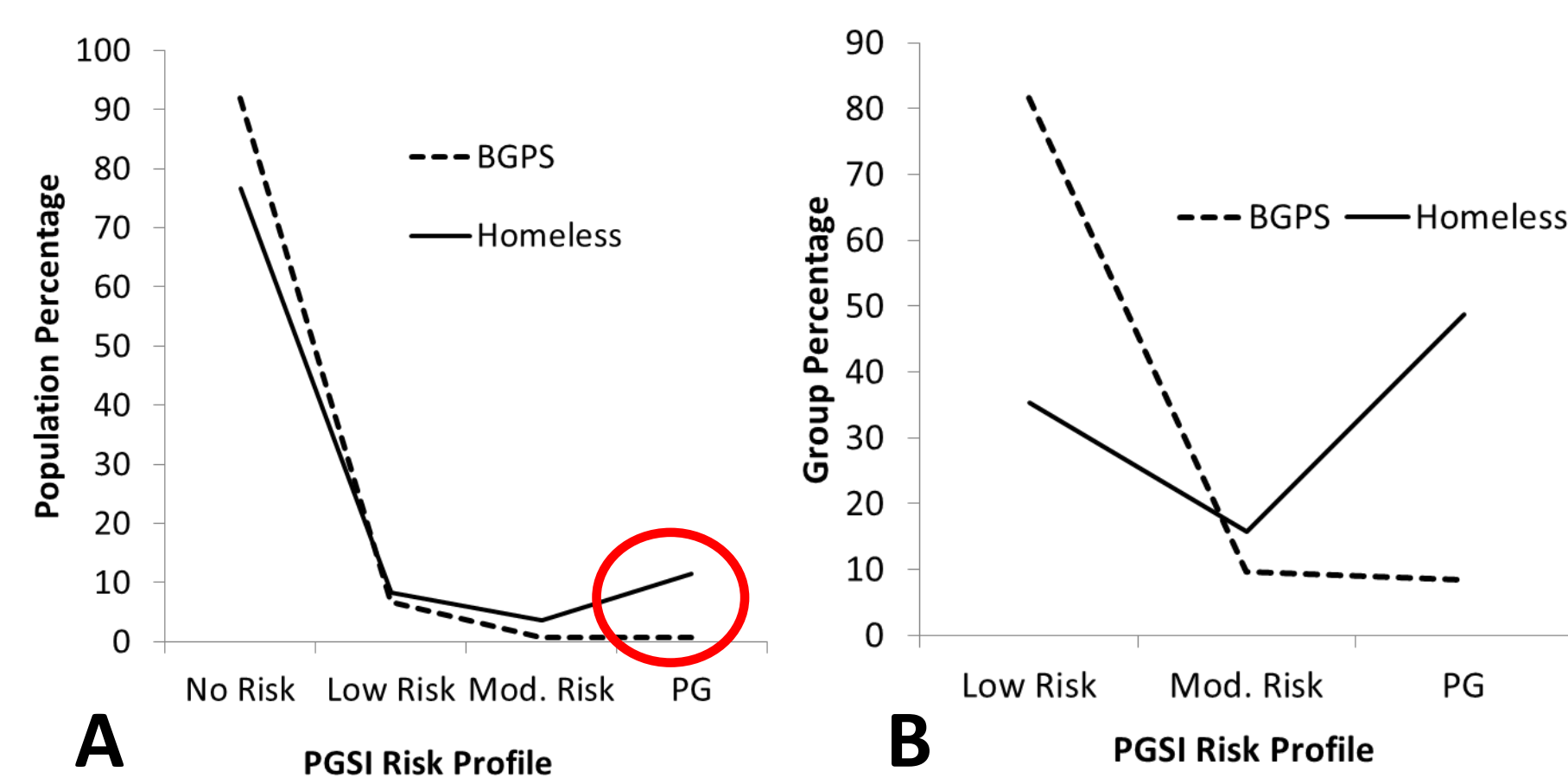
- Gambling is a popular pastime in the UK, and worldwide. Approximately **73%** of UK adults gambled in the 12 months prior to the last BGPS, (British Gambling Prevalence Survey, Wardle *et al*, 2011) – over 35 million adults
- Using the Problem Gambling Severity Index, the BGPS reported around **0.7 %** of the population gambled in a way that is considered clinically disordered
- However as the BGPS is a postal survey to private address, it does not include the homeless population

## Homelessness

- Over 3500 people sleeping rough on any given night in the UK. Highest proportion in London- within London, most in Westminster
- Over 100,000 households considered as statutory homeless. Hidden homeless – sofa surfing or staying with friends / relatives, but with no fixed abode
- All types of homelessness increasing annually in the UK
- The homeless have been shown to report increased levels of drug and alcohol abuse, mental illness, depression, loneliness, and childhood maltreatment compared to the general population
- Limited previous international evidence showing increased gambling in the homeless population (Nower *et al*, 2014 – USA; Matheson *et al*, 2014 – Canada)
- However nothing in the UK.

## Homeless v BGPS

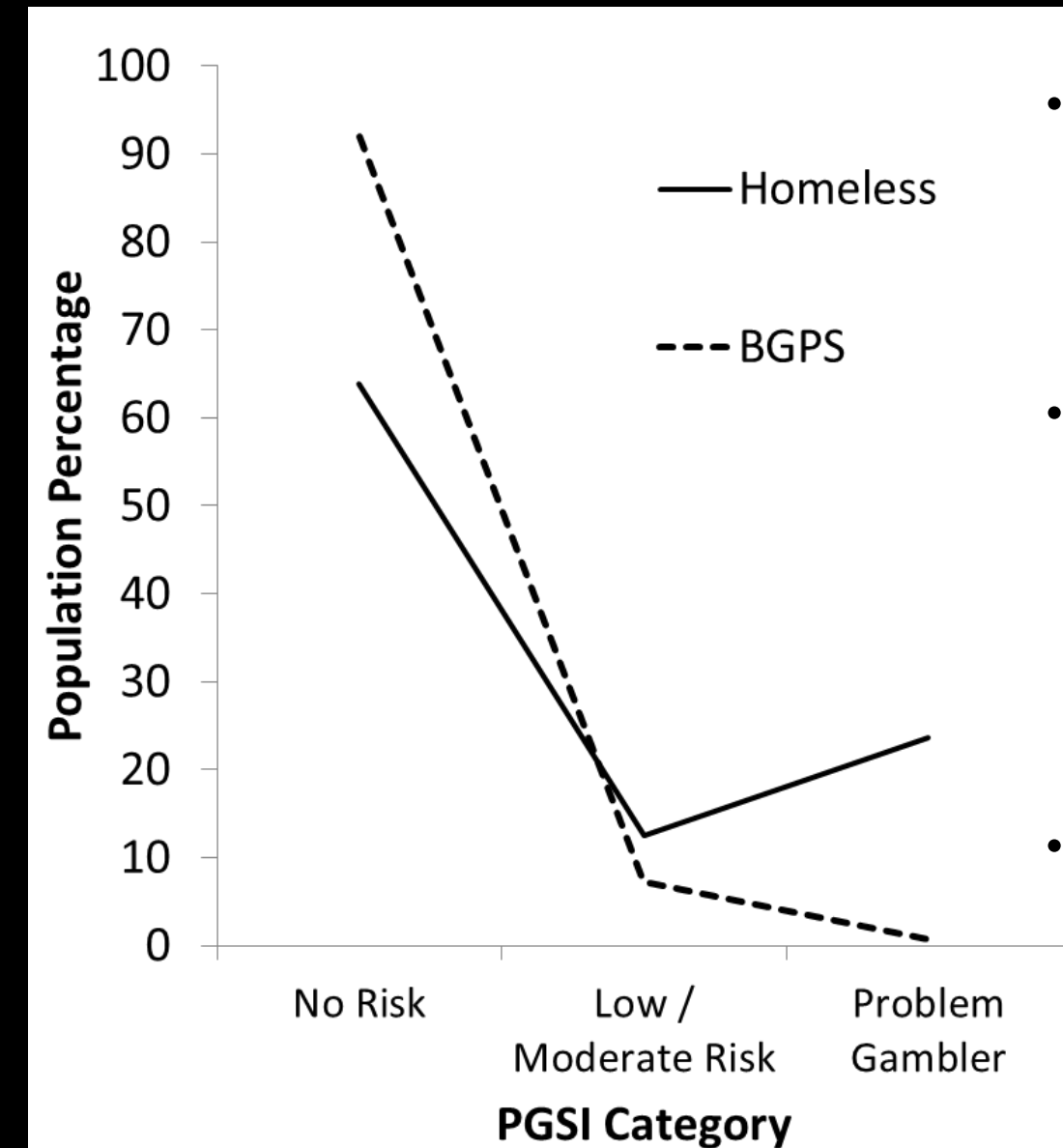
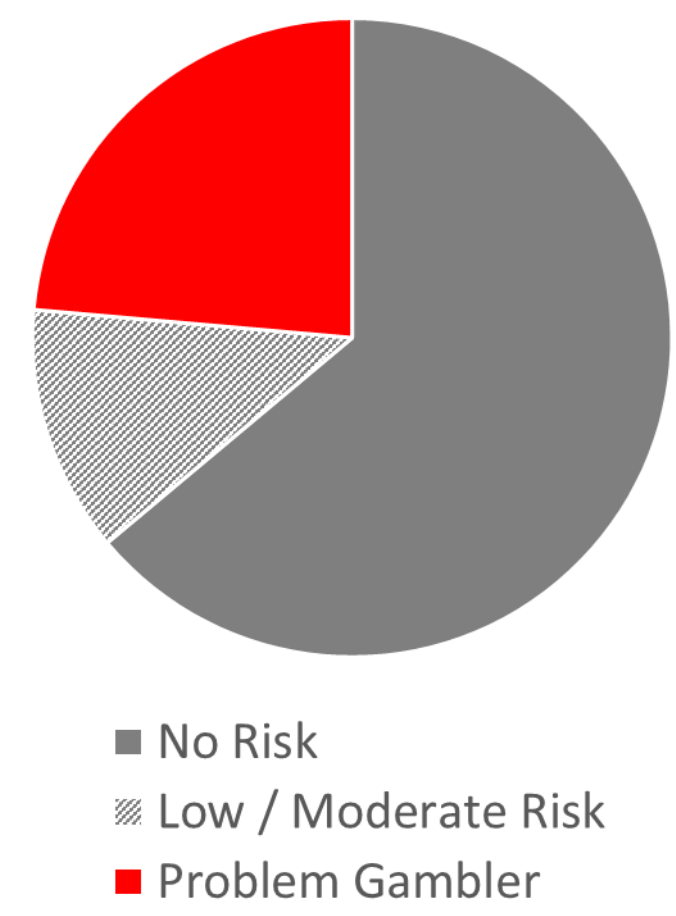
- Graph A: Reliable risk category distribution differences in the homeless compared to the general population, driven by difference in No risk and Problem Gambler categories ( $\chi^2(3) = 11.1$ ,  $p < .011$ ).
- Graph B: Data for those who scored  $\geq 1$  on the PGSI, indicating some level of risk. Significantly greater proportion of at risk gamblers are problem gamblers relative to the BGPS data ( $\chi^2(2)=47.1$ ,  $p < .001$ ).



## Results (2)

Overall sample (n=72):

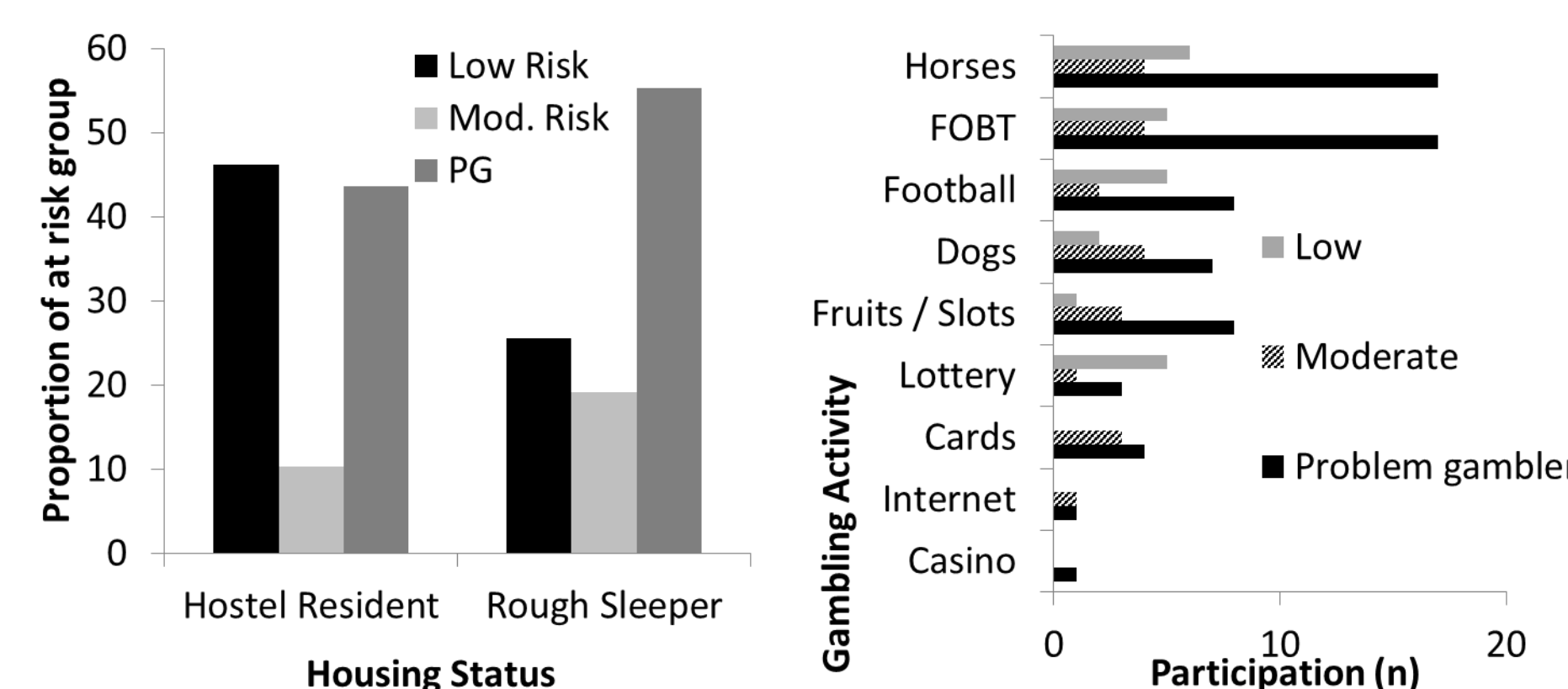
- PGSI 'problem gambling' (score > 7): 23.6%.
- Moderate or Low risk (score 1-7): 12.5%
- 'No risk' (score 0): 63.9%.
- Elevated levels of PG replicated



- Reliable difference between our data and the BGPS ( $\chi^2(2) = 27.98$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Driven by No Risk and PG groups
- Some Risk: **61.5%** of participants with some level of gambling risk had gambling problems **before** homelessness; **15.4%** reported experiencing problems **after** becoming homeless.
- Problem Gamblers: **82.4%** of PGs indicated gambling problems **before** homelessness, versus **17.6%** that experienced gambling problems **after** homelessness.

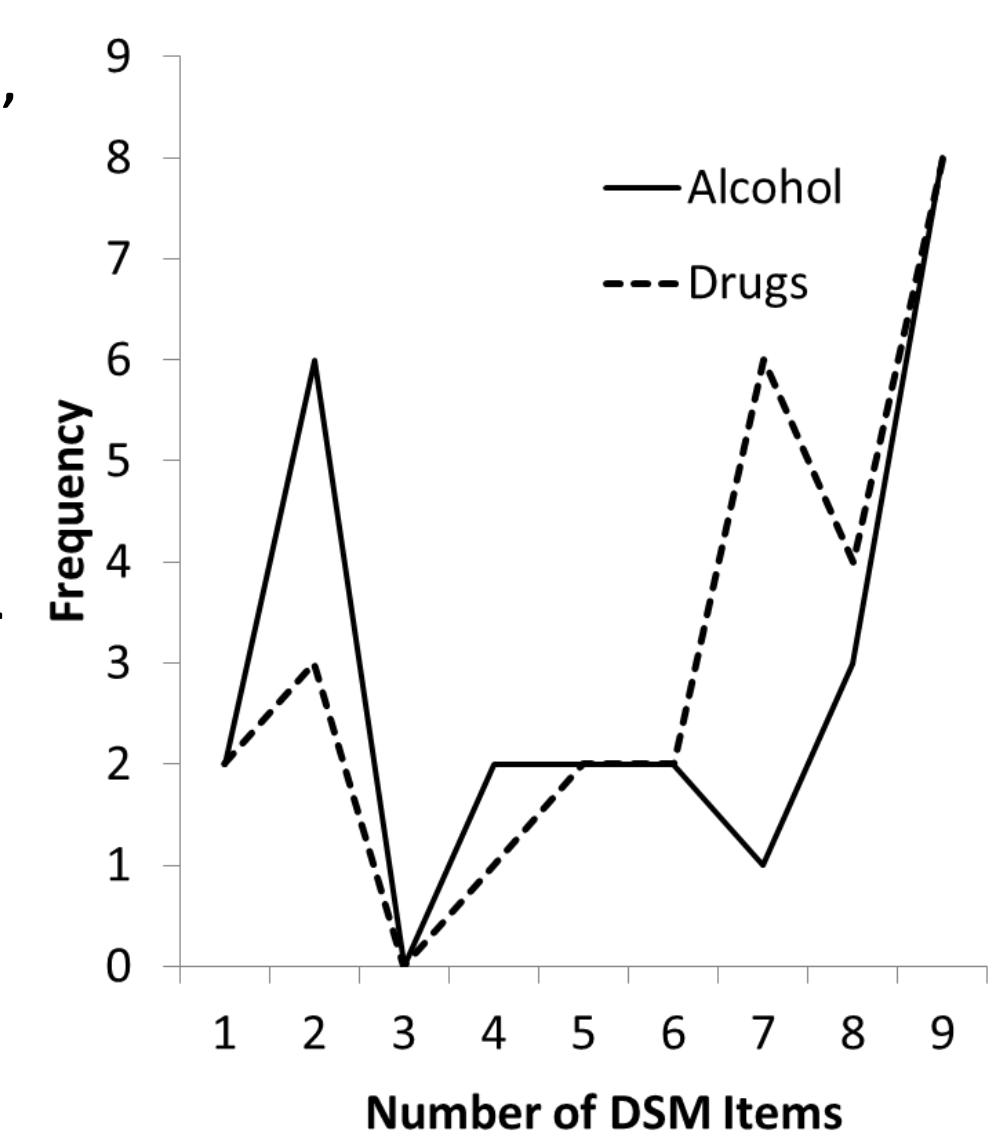
## Sleeping Status and Preferred Form

- Gambling risk distribution differs between hostel residents and rough sleepers ( $\chi^2(2) = 9.9$ ,  $p = .007$ ).
- Game preferences (n=106): FOBTs and horse racing were the most popular gambling activities among homeless problem gamblers; online and casino gambling least common.



## Gambling, drugs and alcohol

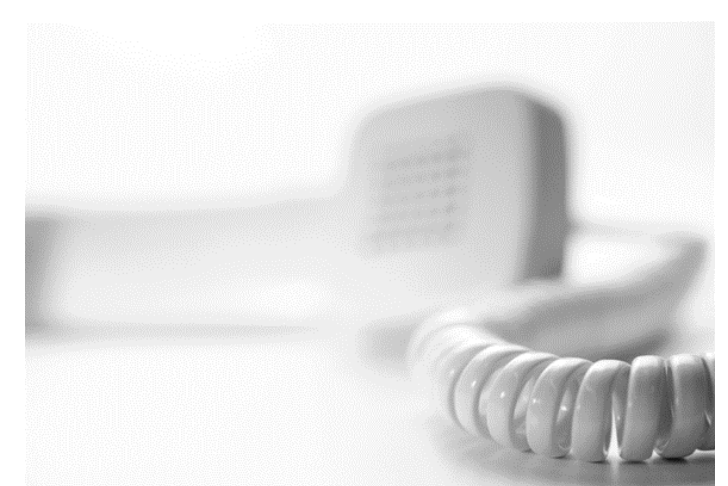
- 70.8%** of participants drunk alcohol, and **36.1%** endorsed at least one DSM-IV alcohol item.
- 41.7%** of participants used substances other than alcohol and tobacco. **38.9%** endorsed at least one DSM-IV substance use disorder item.
- PGSI scores were not correlated with the number of endorsed DSM-IV alcohol disorder items ( $r = -.06$ ) or DSM-IV substance disorder items ( $r = .02$ ).



- Modal number of endorsed items for both alcohol and drugs was 9, reflecting the bi-modal pattern of engagement seen in gambling; minimal, or disordered.

## Treatment Services

- Awareness of Treatment Services
  - Gambling: **76.9%**
  - Alcohol: **94.7%**
  - Substance: **95.7%**
- Utilisation of Treatment Services
  - Gambling: **26.9%**
  - Alcohol: **46.2%**
  - Drugs: **67.9%**



## Study 1 – Aims and Methodology

- Key aim: To measure the prevalence of problem gambling within a homeless sample in the UK, and to compare this to the general population
- Participants were recruited from 16 homeless centres across Westminster (n=456). Participants were recruited from homeless shelters, hostels and day centres.
- Data collected via survey responses, administered by key workers

## Results (1)

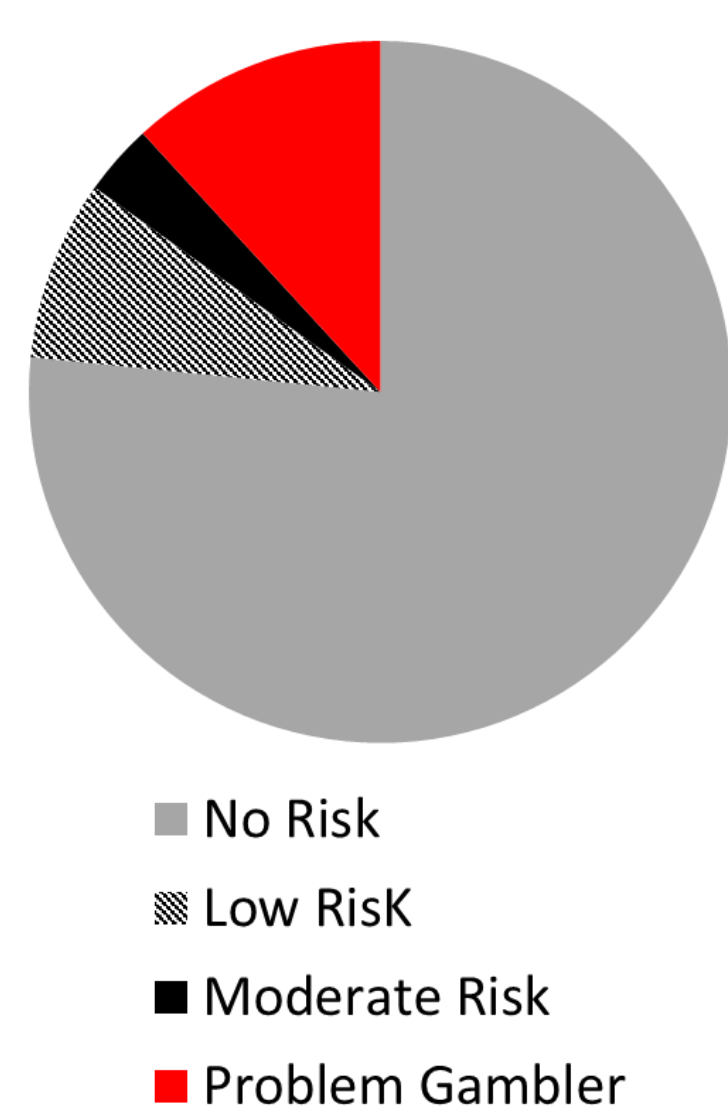
Overall sample (n=456):

PGSI 'problem gambling' (score > 7): **11.4%**.

'Moderate risk' (score 5-7): 3.7%

'Low risk' (score 1-4): 8.3%

'No risk' (score 0): 76.6%.



Levels of problem gambling are significantly higher in the homeless population than in the general population

## Study 2 – Aims and Methodology

- Study 1 confirmed that there is an elevated level of problem gambling prevalence in the homeless population
  - However, it does not tell us anything about the direction of the effect; is gambling more commonly a cause, or a consequence of homelessness?
  - Study 2: Participants were recruited from homeless shelters, hostels and day centres across Westminster (n= 72).
  - Data collected via semi structured interviews, conducted by researchers. Interviews were more qualitative in nature, although the data was recorded for quantitative analysis.
- Key Aims**
- To replicate elevated levels of problem gambling, and to establish if gambling is more commonly a cause or a consequence of homelessness
  - To measure the relationship between gambling, and drug and alcohol use
  - To establish the awareness and utilisation of gambling treatment services amongst the homeless population.

## Conclusions and Future work



- Gambling and homelessness have a complex relationship. Gambling is predominantly a cause of homelessness, however some problems develop post homelessness.
- Homelessness and gambling does not occur in a vacuum; further work is needed to understand the relationship between homelessness, gambling, and other mental health disorders.
- Next stage of research is in collaboration with Shelter, Crisis and Homeless Link; 20 in-depth interviews with homeless gamblers to truly understand the nature of the relationship
- Data from these interviews will help develop a brief cognitive screen and intervention, which will be used to reduce the impact of gambling on homelessness.